



FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE NORTHWEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3011425

Address: 10507 Aurora Avenue North

Applicant: Scott Starr, SMR Architects for Downtown Emergency Service Centers

Date of Meeting: Monday, May 09, 2011

Board Members Present: Jerry Coburn
Mike DeLilla
Jean Morgan
David Neiman

Board Members Absent: Ted Panton

DPD Staff Present: Michael M. Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: Commercial One with a 40' height limit.
(C1-40)

Nearby Zones: North: C1-40
South: C1-40
East: C1-40
West: Lowrise Two (LR2)

Lot Area: The rectangular site is relatively flat and totals 19,976 square feet in size.



Current Development:	The site is currently occupied by a commercial building housing a restaurant (Cyndy's) and an accessory, surface parking lot.
Access:	Current access is off both the alley and from Aurora Avenue N.
Surrounding Development:	Development along both sides of Aurora Avenue N. primarily consists of single story commercial buildings. Across the alley, to the west of the site, there is mostly low-scale multifamily development which buffers single-family development that begins a half of a block to the west.
ECAs:	No identified environmentally critical areas exist on or abut the site.
Neighborhood Character:	The site and area lie within part of the Aurora-Licton Springs Residential Urban Village. The site faces onto Aurora Avenue N., a busy arterial, also known as Pacific Highway 99, a State of Washington Highway that connects with the Canadian border to the north and to state highways 99 in Oregon and California that connect to Mexico. Development along Aurora Avenue N. in Seattle is that of "strip" commercial development, situated to serve customers arriving in vehicles. The pattern of development is characterized by discontinuous, low-slung lodging and commercial buildings perched as islands on seas of asphalt-paved parking lots easily accessed by vehicles from the highway. A notable break in this pattern occurs not too far to the north of the site where a large cemetery complex lies on either side of Aurora Avenue N. and provides a moment of quietude before the noise of the strip resumes.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes a four-story mixed use building containing 87 residential units above a ground floor containing approximately 5,000 square feet of retail and administrative office space. Additional common spaces for the residents of the building and parking will be supplied within the western portion of the ground floor which will be shared with parking for approximately 21 vehicles.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Based on the guidance from two earlier EDG meetings, the applicant revised the project and returned to the Northwest Board for a Recommendation meeting. The applicant presented a single, four-story rectangular mass comprising nearly the entire development site. The building program at ground level has commercial uses extending along Aurora Avenue N. The building's mechanical functions, common rooms (including dining) and parking are arranged around a narrow courtyard on the west half of the proposed plan. The residential plan for two of the upper floors has most of the studio units wrapped around the courtyard. The upper-most floor (the fourth level) sets back from the alley providing a roof deck and green roof over the third

floor, acknowledging the lower heights of the multifamily housing immediately across the alley and to the west.

A combination of color and material changes provide definition for the east elevation's base, middle and top. A vertical bifurcation of the mostly horizontal composition occurs not quite mid-point in the east elevation, signaling the primary or formal residential entry on Aurora and extending upward as glazing to the roof. Storefront windows grace the street level along Aurora Avenue N., announcing the structure's commercial and office uses. A thin course of tan brick separates the red brick and glass of the commercial level from the upper residential floors. Painted red, vertical metal panels define the two middle floors. A tan colored horizontal band further subdivides the mid-section of the composition. The shape of the residential fenestration on these two floors remains distinct from the ground floor and the upper-most floor. The design identifies the fourth floor as different or special from the middle sections by changing the color from red to light brown, using another material ---fiber-cement lap siding, creating a much different window pattern, and angling the roof slightly. The various mix of colors and materials wraps around to the north and south facades; however, the combination no longer identifies a horizontal layering of floors and uses but emphasizes minor massing elements such as the stair towers. The west façade introduces bay windows above the garage level presumably to relate to the townhouses across the alley. This façade has no less than six distinct colors. One color defines the back of house and garage level, three colors delineate the bay windows, a fifth the background plane and the sixth color presents itself at the fourth level.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Two members of the public affixed their names to the sign-in sheet for this Recommendation meeting. Three members of the public raised the following comments and issues:

- General concern that the alley drainage be improved;
- Ensure the safety and comfort of bus passengers at the Metro stop adjacent the alley;
- One member of the public was concerned that people coming to the project would park adjacent to his home because of the insufficient parking offered on site.

Board Deliberations

The board felt that the design was generally positively responsive to the board's previous guidance. The board also expressed the felt that the Board's previous emphasis on Google design may have come across too literally. After some discussion regarding whether the color scheme should be muted somewhat, the board approved of the general color scheme as presented and expressed a willingness to put up with refinements in the scheme as they might occur; they especially liked the brick. It was agreed that, while overhead weather protection might not be totally appropriate along the whole of the Aurora Avenue N. façade, the overhead weather protection needed to be expanded at the residential entry and should be used to emphasize the residential entry.

Departures:

No departures were identified or requested by the applicant.

Board Recommendation

The Board unanimously approved the project subject to the following conditions:

1. The Board felt that the main residential entry should receive more emphasis, and an important part of this modification would be an expansion of the overhead weather protection. The board recommended that this overhead protection should work with the public art at the entry, but should not necessarily connect to or overshadow the public art. The applicant should work with the Land Use Planner to produce an acceptable alternative design.
2. The board recommended that the color of the red-orange bay window on the alley should be changed to match the other bay windows, or that more red-orange color should be added overall.
3. The Board approved the color scheme provided in the application. The board felt that the colors could be reduced in intensity if the applicant, with the consensus of the Land Use Planner, felt that the reduction in intensity overall, or in particular applications, was appropriate.

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